

THE CEREMONIES OF HOLY WEEK EXPLAINED.

PALM SUNDAY.

[Where there is only one priest, he says or sings the parts of the service which in High Mass are sung by the deacon and subdeacon.]

The ceremony of Palm Sunday consists of three parts. First, the Celebrant blesses and distributes palm-leaves (for which, on account of the difficulty and expense of obtaining them in sufficient quantity, branches of box, willow, or yew are often substituted) to all present. Then comes the procession of palms; and, thirdly, the Holy Mass is offered, during which the "Passion" according to St. Matthew (being that Evangelist's narrative of the sufferings and death of our Saviour) is sung.

Now, during this service, the Church sets herself to picture to us two very opposite feelings: joy and gladness at her Master's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; bitter sorrow at His approaching death. On this day, the first day of the week of the Passover, the week in which Jesus died, He entered the Holy City in triumph. We are told that His disciples were with him, that the multitudes cut down branches of palm-trees and cried aloud with one voice: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." At the same time the cloud of approaching tribulation was gathering dark and thick over the Church, for in five days her Master was to be crucified. To express to us, her children, these opposite emotions, she gives us, first, the blessing of palms, and, in the joyous procession, depicts the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, while, in the Mass that follows, the mournful chant of the Passion shadows forth the coming desolation.

We shall now take each part separately, so that you may understand what the priest is doing, while you follow him in your Holy Week book. After the *Asperges*, which is the same as on other Sundays, except that the *Gloria Patri* is omitted as is usual in Passiontide, the priest begins—

1.—The Blessing of the Palms.

It is a rule in the Church's Liturgy to bless and sanctify everything that is used in the service of God or given to the people. The palms are blessed with great solemnity; and, indeed, we might easily suppose that the Mass had already begun, and was to be offered up in honor of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. After a Collect, the subdeacon sings the Lesson you will find in your book, which relates how Moses and the children of Israel encamped in the wilderness under the seventy palm trees at Elim; the deacon chants the Gospel, giving St. Matthew's account of this day; a Preface is sung and even a *Sanctus*. After this preparation comes the prayers of blessing, in which we are reminded of God's gracious mercies in the past, how the dove brought the olive branch to Noe in the ark, and how God protected the Jews under the palm trees of Elim.

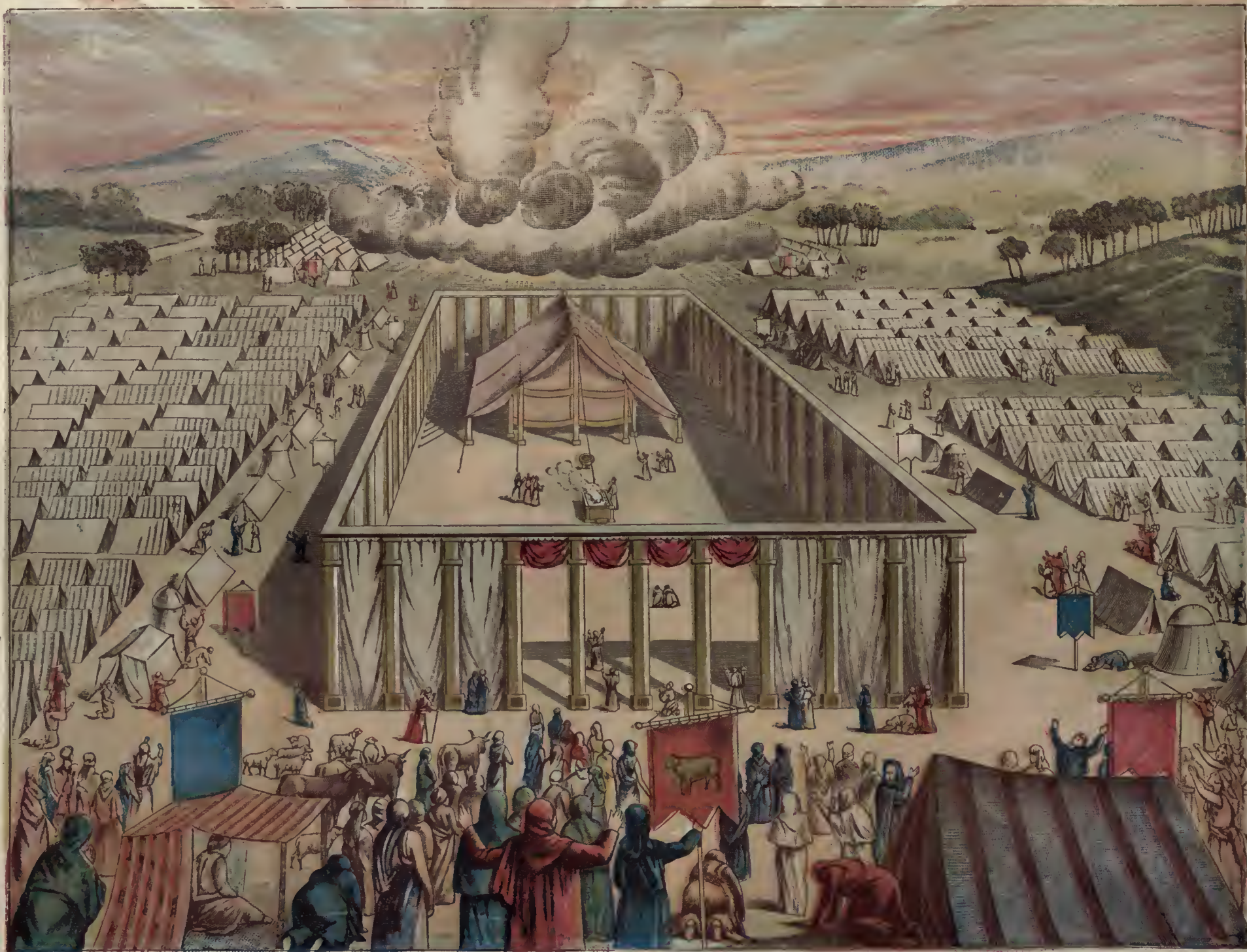
Then comes the distribution of the palms. Receive the palm kneeling; kiss it, as a mark of reverence to the blessing of the Church, and also kiss the priest's hand as an act of respect to the Church's ministers. During the procession, and while the Passion is sung, hold your palm in your hand.

2.—The Procession.

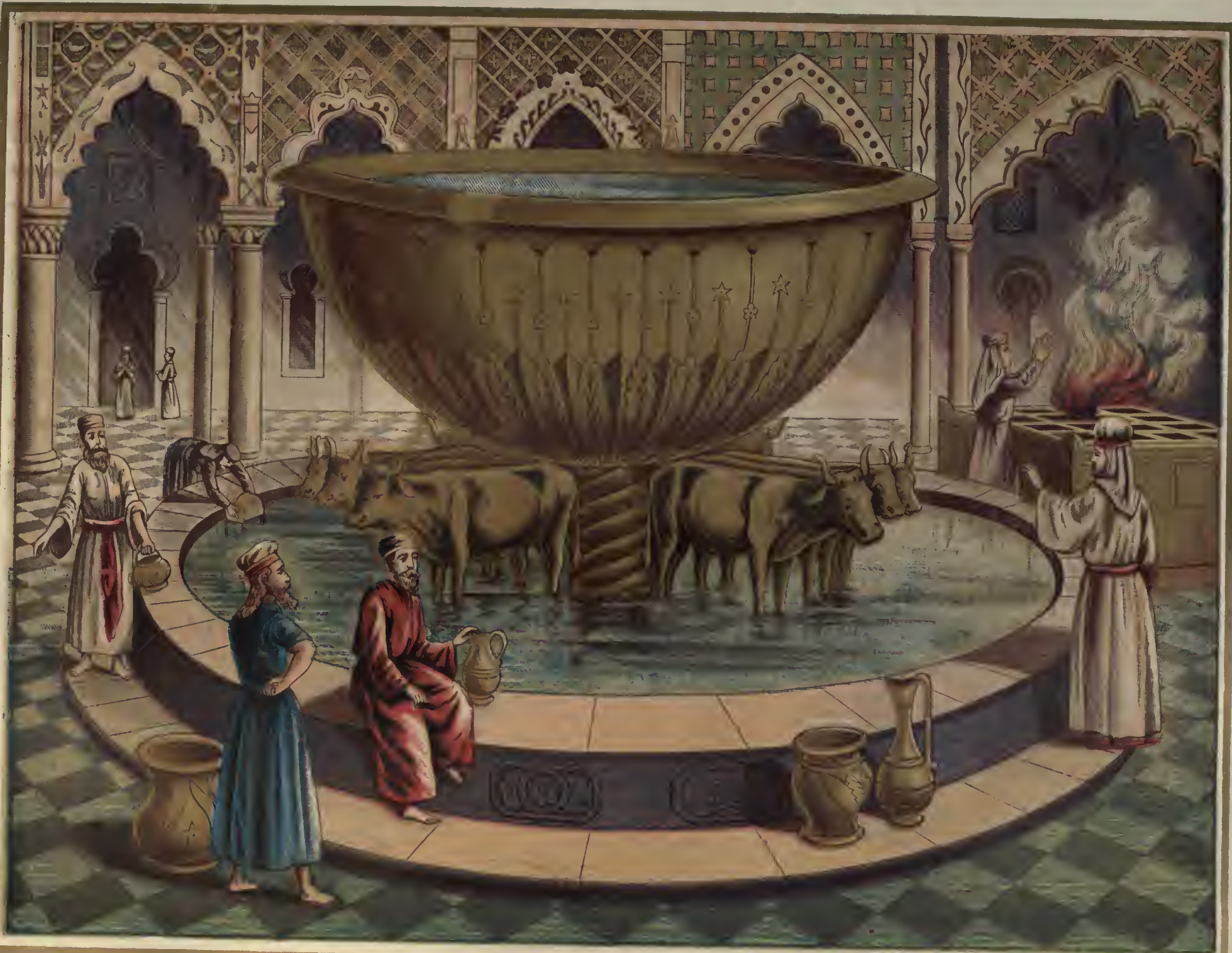
As soon as the palms are distributed, the clergy and choir leave the sanctuary, following the cross-bearer and acolytes. The music is bright and joyous, in memory of the shouts of triumph which hailed our King, while all carry palms to help us to realize the procession on this day in the Holy City. The procession leaves the church still singing, but on its return it finds the doors shut against it. Its progress is arrested, but its song of joy continues; until at length the subdeacon strikes the closed doors with the cross he is carrying. The doors are then thrown open, and all enter singing the praises of our Saviour-God. By this symbolical act is signified that the gates of heaven were shut



THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE



THE TABERNAACLE IN THE WILDERNESS



THE MOLTEN SEA



HIGH PRIEST IN "LINEN ROBES"

HIGH PRIEST IN "GARMENTS OF BEAUTY AND GLORY"

against all men in punishment for the sin of our first parents, but that Jesus has opened these gates once more to us by His Cross, which has triumphed over sin and death.

3.—The Mass.

The third part of to-day's service is the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The parts sung by the choir are expressive of the deepest grief; and, indeed, the Church retains no trace of the short-lived joy and triumph of the procession of the Palms. St. Matthew's narrative of the Passion, which is sung to-day before the Gospel, imparts to this Sunday that character of sacred gloom which is known to us all. For the last five or six hundred years the Church has adopted a special chant for this narrative of the Holy Gospel. It is sung by three deacons (or priests vested as deacons) and the choir. One deacon takes the part of Chronicler, and sings all the narrative of the Evangelist. Another deacon, called the *Christus*, sings in a low and plaintive voice the words spoken by our dear Lord Himself; the third takes at a high pitch the words of Pilate, Judas and Caiphas, while the choir sings the words and exclamations of the crowd. When the Chronicler relates the death of our Saviour, all kneel for a few moments, in silent awe and contemplation of the Sacrifice that is consummated. After this the Gospel is sung; but to express our sorrow, lights are not carried; at the same time, to express the living hope of our Master's triumph, we hold in our hands the palms of victory. After the Gospel, the Mass continues as usual to the end.

TENEBRÆ.

As we enter the Church we are struck by many signs of mourning at this sacred time. The Sanctuary looks deserted and unfurnished. The Tabernacle stands open, for the Blessed Sacrament has been removed. The veil of the Tabernacle, flowers, and other ornaments are gone. Nothing remains on the Altar except the veiled Crucifix and the six candles. In the centre of the sanctuary stands the book for the Psalms and Lessons. At the Epistle side stands a large triangular candlestick, holding fifteen candles of common or unbleached wax.

The Office at which we are now to assist is called *Tenebræ* (meaning *darkness*), because it pictures to us, by the gradual darkening of the Church, the more than natural darkness that overshadowed the world at the death of Jesus Christ. It is the preparation which the Church gives us that we may assist in proper dispositions at the sacred function which is to take place next morning. On Wednesday evening we sing the *Tenebræ* of Thursday in preparation for the Mass and Office of Thursday; on Thursday evening we sing by anticipation the Office of Good Friday; on Friday evening we sing the preparation for the Office and Mass of Easter Eve. In early times these Offices were begun at midnight, but we are allowed to have them at an earlier hour in order to enable more of us to be present.

The service consists of Matins and Lauds, and is a portion of the Divine Office which every priest of the Church is bound to say each day. We have remarked that no adornment and ornament, nothing but what is essential, is allowed to remain in the Sanctuary during these days of mourning. The Church carries this same spirit into her service of prayer, and leaves nothing in the Office save what is essential to it—the Psalms and Lessons. The versicles and hymns, the invitations and responses which are used at other times, and form, so to speak, the drapery and adornment in which the Psalms and Lessons are clothed, are omitted on these days. The Matins consists of three parts, called *Nocturns* (night offices). Each nocturn is made up of three Psalms and three Lessons. The Lauds consists of five Psalms, followed by the Canticle of Zachary (*Benedictus*), and the whole Office is closed with the 50th Psalm (*Miserere*) and a Collect. The *Tenebræ* service for Maunday Thursday in the Psalms and Lessons brings before us the Passion of our Saviour, and in an especial way the treachery of Judas. In the third nocturn, however, the Lessons appropriately relate St. Paul's account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

The ceremonies of this service are rich in meaning. At the end of each Psalm one of the candles in the triangular candlestick is extinguished until, as the Office proceeds, one only is left alight. By this is shown forth how one by one the disciples

forsook their Master and slunk away. The one candle that remains alight represents Jesus Christ forsaken and left to "tread the winepress alone." During the Cantic of Zachary (*Benedictus*), the six candles on the Altar are put out, and the lights in the Church are gradually lowered, to symbolize the noonday darkness that covered the earth at the death of its Creator.

At the end of the *Benedictus*, the single candle that still burns is hidden behind the Altar, while the *Miserere* is sung amid the gloom. A Collect is then said in a low voice by the senior priest present, and a confused noise is made, to express the convulsions of nature when the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves gave up their dead. The candle is then brought from behind the Altar, still alight, to represent that, after His Death and Burial, our dear Lord came forth immortal from the tomb. The Office ended, all depart in silence.

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

In spite of the mourning of Holy Week, the Church cannot allow this great day to pass without some signs of joy. It is the day of the Last Supper of our dear Lord—the day on which He instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist; and in honor of that great Mystery the Church lays aside her mourning, at least during the celebration of Holy Mass, and bids us deck the Altar with our richest ornaments, and wear vestments of white, the color denoting joy and gladness. We would remind our readers that the Last Supper took place on the first day of the *Azymes*, or the *Feast of the Unleavened Bread*, and it is for that reason that we always use unleavened bread for consecration in Holy Mass. Again, to show forth the unity and greatness of this Supper, the Church allows on this day only one Mass to be offered in each church, at which the clergy and congregation assist and receive Holy Communion, the priests wearing stoles, the token of their priesthood. This brings before us in a forcible way the scene in the Upper Chamber in Jerusalem, where our Lord alone consecrated and then gave Holy Communion to those present. We shall divide our explanations of the service into three sections.

1.—The Mass.

Amid the triumph of this great feast a web of sorrow is interwoven, to show that our joy is not lasting, for we have not forgotten the Passion of Jesus Christ. The Celebrant intones the *Gloria in excelsis*, and the bells ring out joyously in answer to the organ's peals; but after that, both bells and organ are silent until Holy Saturday, to show the sorrow of the whole world at our Saviour's death. The Collects recall to us Judas and the good thief; both are guilty, but one is pardoned. The kiss of peace is omitted, to show our horror of the treacherous kiss of Judas in the Garden on this night.

2.—The Procession to the Altar of Repose.

On Good Friday, as we shall see, the Church suspends the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to commemorate in this solemn way the Sacrifice that was offered on that day on Calvary. The priest consecrates two hosts on Holy Thursday during the Mass. One of these he receives in Holy Communion; the other he reverently places in a chalice, and reserves to be consumed on Good Friday. The Blessed Sacrament could not be reserved with fitting respect at the High Altar, on account of the mournful ceremonies of this holy time; and consequently a chapel or altar, apart from the High Altar, is prepared and adorned with rich hangings, light, and flowers: here our Blessed Lord remains until Good Friday. When the Mass to-day is finished, the choir and clergy go in procession to this Chapel of Repose. After the cross-bearer and acolytes come the choir and clergy, singing the *Pange Lingua*, followed by the Celebrant and sacred ministers under the canopy. The priest does not carry the Monstrance, as in other processions, but the Chalice, containing the Blessed Sacrament, covered with a veil. When he arrives at the Altar of Repose, he places It in the Tabernacle or urn, where It will remain until to-morrow's service. Until then Jesus will not be left alone; by day and night loving souls will keep watch there in humble adoration, making amends for the scorn and insults which Jesus has suffered for our sins. More especially will they be present during the silent watches of the night; for this is the

night when He suffered the Agony in the Garden, and was betrayed by Judas, and delivered into the hands of His enemies.

3.—Stripping the Altars.

The procession then leaves the Altar of Repose, the sacred ministers go to the sacristy, and the other clergy and choir go to the Sanctuary to recite Vespers, which are said, not sung. At the end of Vespers the priests enter the Sanctuary to strip the Altar, as Jesus was stripped of His garments before the Crucifixion. The ornaments and flowers that were there to denote our joyful commemoration of the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament are taken away, the very altar-cloths are stripped off, because the Daily Sacrifice is suspended, in token of our grief: *They have parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they have cast lots.* The holy water is removed from the porch, and none is put there until after the Mass on Holy Saturday.

GOOD FRIDAY.

We have come now to the day of the Church's widowhood, and she would have it to be a day of desolation, as her true children feel it to be. The Sanctuary is altogether bare and unadorned. The Altar was stripped of its ornaments yesterday morning, and nothing remains except the Crucifix, now veiled in black, and the six candlesticks. The Sanctuary carpet has been taken away, and even the candles are not lighted until the latter part of the function. To enable us to enter into the spirit of this service, and to appreciate fully the meaning of its various parts, we must bear in mind that to-day the priest does not offer sacrifice—that he does not, so to say, stand in the place of Jesus Christ and speak in His name and with His power; but rather as the spokesman and representative of the congregation present: as a consequence of this, they follow and take part in the various acts of reparation he performs. This is the key-note to the right understanding of the whole function.

The service of to-day consists of a series of distinct actions. We shall divide our explanation into four parts: 1. *History*, containing the Prophecies and the Passion according to St. John. 2. *Supplication*, containing public prayer for all sorts and

conditions of men. 3. *Reparation*, containing the unveiling and adoration of the Cross. 4. The *Mass of the Presanctified*.

1.—The Passion.

The choir and sacred ministers approach the Sanctuary in silence. Neither incense nor lights are carried before them, and the vestments are black, "as when one mourneth." On the Altar there is neither Missal nor Altar-cloth. When the sacred ministers reach the Sanctuary, instead of beginning by public prayer, they prostrate themselves on the ground in silence, while a cloth and the book are laid on the Altar. They then rise, and at once proceed to read the Lessons and Collects, which bring before us the Paschal Lamb, the type of the Lamb of God, who is to-day sacrificed for our sins. These Lessons prepare us for the "Passion," which gives us St. John's account of the terrible events of this great day. The Passion is sung, as on Palm Sunday, by three deacons (or priests), who each take a part, the choir sustaining, as before, the part of the multitude.

2.—The Prayers.

The second part of the service consists of *supplication* and *petition*. The idea of the Church in this action is to make intercession with God on this day for all classes and conditions of men. While the Church bids us pray at all times for the conversion of sinners and evil-doers, on this day she makes *public* and *official* prayer for those who are "enemies of the Cross of Christ." For mercy knows no bounds; and our dying Saviour has given utterance to the words, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The Celebrant sings eight prayers, each of which is prefaced by a few words to show its object. Before each prayer the deacon bids us all kneel for a moment, and the subdeacon bids us rise, to show by this bodily action our union in the petition made by the priest in our name. First comes the prayer for the Spouse of Jesus Christ, the Church of God; then the prayer for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Pope happily reigning; then the prayer for bishops, priests and other servants of the Church; then the prayer for the catechumens; then the prayer for

all in tribulation or danger; then the prayer for heretics and schismatics; then the prayer for the Jews; and, lastly, that our charity may embrace all human creatures for whom Jesus shed His Blood, comes the prayer for pagans. Before the prayer for the Jews, the deacon refrains from bidding us to genuflect, because they turned this mark of adoration into an insult against our Lord in His Passion.

3.—The Unveiling of the Cross.

The third action in to-day's service is *reparation*. The Church will have us make what reparation we can to Jesus Christ for the ignominy of His passion by showing honor and veneration to the cross in memory of His Crucifixion to-day. Accordingly, the Celebrant takes off his chasuble, the symbol of his priestly dignity, in order to be first to humble himself on this day of mourning. He receives the veiled cross, and, standing at the side of the Altar, he uncovers a small part, raising it slightly for people to see, and sings in a low voice: *Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world*; and all kneel to pay their homage to the sign of our redemption. Mounting nearer the Altar, he goes through the same ceremony a second time; and then, coming to the centre of the Altar, he removes the veil entirely, and lifting the cross aloft sings on a high note the same words a third time, in memory of our Saviour's words: "When I shall have been lifted up, I will draw all things to Myself." By this uncovering of the Cross is represented the gradual preaching to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles the great mystery of the Crucifixion, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness."

The Celebrant then places the Crucifix on the ground, and, in token of his humiliation and abasement, takes off his shoes, for the place whereon he stands is holy ground, and goes to kiss the feet of the figure that represents his dying Saviour. As he approaches, he kneels three times and finally kisses devoutly the symbol of our redemption. All who are present follow his example, either at this Crucifix or at one of the crosses in the side chapels (according to convenience), taking care to make *three* genuflections (not more), and making the third close to the Cross itself, so that as they kneel

they can kiss the figure. During this touching ceremony, the choir sings in plaintive chants the *Reproaches*, which bring before us in a dramatic way the rebukes, loving and gentle, addressed by our Saviour to the Jews. It will help us much to realize to-day's events if we read these Reproaches, which our dear Lord addresses now to us.

4.—The Mass of the Presanctified.

We need not delay long over our explanation of the fourth action in to-day's service—the Mass of the Presanctified. The candles on the Altar are now lighted in reverence for the coming Presence of Jesus Christ. The clergy go in procession to the Chapel of Repose, and bring back to the High Altar the Blessed Sacrament, which has been reserved in a chalice since the Mass of yesterday. During the procession the choir sings the *Rexilla Regis*. On this day alone throughout the Christian year the Church suspends the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, that our thoughts may be wholly taken up with the contemplation of the one Sacrifice that was consummated to-day on Calvary. The Blessed Sacrament, which the Celebrant receives to-day, was consecrated (or *presanctified*) yesterday. Consequently, since there is no actual Sacrifice to-day, this part of the service is called the *Mass of the Presanctified*. When the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the Altar, the priest incenses It. He then turns to the people and bids them pray (*orate, frates*), and himself prays aloud, singing the *Pater noster*, He holds up for their adoration the Sacred Body of our Lord, and then reverently receives It. To mark our mourning and confusion to-day, the priest does not remain at the Altar to say any public prayers of thanksgiving or to give a blessing, as in other Masses; but straightway leaves the Sanctuary. As soon as he departs, the Vespers are recited as yesterday, and the altars are stripped. The Sanctuary is empty, its light is gone, no lamp burns in any part of the Church, the pictures are veiled; the naked Cross stands alone to proclaim the mourning of the Spouse for the Crucifixion of her Lord. *They shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him as is the manner to grieve for the death of the first-born.*

HOLY SATURDAY.

It was the practice of the Church from the earliest ages that no Mass was said on Holy Saturday. For a thousand years after the foundation of the Church it was the custom to spend this day in prayer and fasting, in watching in spirit with the Holy Women at the Sepulchre until the morning of the Resurrection. At midnight, on Friday, the Divine Office for Easter Eve was sung; but the service and Mass that we have now on Holy Saturday really took place on Saturday night, and, extending till dawn on the Sunday morning, was the immediate herald of the Resurrection. As the sun went down on Easter Eve, the Bishop and clergy and faithful used to repair to the Church for this Office, and its magnificent functions occupied the whole night, until sunrise on Easter Day. We should bear this in mind if we wish to enter into the spirit of this service, and if we would understand the many allusions we find in it to the night. Another point to remember is, that the service of this night was specially ordained and fitted for the baptism of those converts, or catechumens, who had been previously found worthy of admission into the Christian Church. This will throw light upon the meaning of many of its ceremonies and prayers. We shall divide the service into two sections: the Blessings and the Mass.

I.—The Blessings.

The Church, as we remarked on Palm Sunday, blesses and sanctifies everything she uses in her sacred functions. Holy Saturday is in a special manner a day of blessings, for it is in a sense the birthday of the Church. The service begins, not in the Sanctuary, but at the very entrance to the Church, where new fire, kindled from a flint, is blessed. From this the light is taken for the candles and lamps throughout the church which were extinguished on Good Friday. This was of first importance in the Early Church, that the faithful might have light for the long night ceremony. Five grains of incense are then blessed, and the deacon lights a triple candle (in honor of the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity), and leads the way through the darkness to the Sanctuary, thrice announcing as he goes *Lumen Christi*, the Light of Christ.

When the procession reaches the Sanctuary, the deacon chants his song of triumph (*Exultet*); and solemnly blesses the great Paschal Candle. This candle is of unusual size, standing alone, of a pillar-like form; and in the ages when the service was held at night, shed a "dim religious light" over the Sanctuary during the long vigil. When lighted, it is the representation both of the pillar of fire which went before the people of God in their wanderings through the desert, and of the newborn glory of Jesus risen from the grave. During this grand song of joy the deacon pauses three times: once to fix in the candle the five grains of incense in the form of a cross, which, by their number, represent the Five Wounds, and, by their substance the precious spices which the holy women brought to the Sepulchre this night to embalm the Body of their dead Lord; a second time, he pauses to light the newly blest candle; and a third time, while the lamps in the Church are once more lighted. After this *Exultet* come the Twelve Prophecies, which were primarily intended for the instruction of the catechumens who were to be baptized this night.

Then comes the blessing of the Baptismal Font. In front of the procession is carried the Paschal Candle, which leads these neophytes to the waters of salvation, even as the pillar of fire led the children of Israel to the saving waters of the Red Sea. When the Celebrant reaches the Baptistery, he sings the blessing of the Font. He divides the water in the form of a cross, and scatters some towards the four quarters of the world; he breathes upon it, and invokes the grace and power of the Holy Ghost upon it. He dips the Paschal Candle three times into the water. The people are then sprinkled with this Easter water, and after this the holy Chrism and Oil of Catechumens is poured into the Font to mingle with the baptismal water. This completes the solemn blessing of the Font, and after this the catechumens were formerly baptized and then confirmed. After the blessing of the Font the procession returns to the Sanctuary, and the Litanies of the Saints are sung, during which the Celebrant and sacred ministers lie prostrate before the Altar. Towards the end of the Litanies the priests rise and go to the Sacristy to vest for Mass.

2.—The Mass.

As we have pointed out, the foregoing ceremonies formerly took place during the night of Easter Eve, and the Mass at which we are now going to assist is really the Mass that used to be offered at day-break on Easter morn, after the long vigil. This will explain why it is of such a joyous character. The vestments are white, the *Gloria* is sung, the bells ring out cheerfully, the organ is heard once more. Pictures and images are uncovered; flowers again adorn the Altar, which is decked in white. The Collect of the Mass makes intercession for the newly-baptized, "the new offspring of Thy family."

After the Epistle, the Celebrant intones solemnly three times the *Alleluia*, which is taken up by the choir; the Gospel relates to us the visit to the Sepulchre of Mary Magdalene and the other

Mary at the dawn of day. The Creed is not sung, as it used to be reserved for the second Mass which was sung later on Easter Day. The Kiss of Peace is still omitted, for it was not until evening on the day of the Resurrection that Jesus stood in the midst of His Apostles in the Upper Chamber in the Holy City and gave them His peace. For the same reason the *Agnus Dei* is left out. When this Mass was appointed to be sung on the Saturday morning (instead of at the dawn of Easter Day), it was necessary that it should be followed by Vespers. As the Service is already so long, the Church bids us sing, immediately after the Communion, Vespers containing one Psalm and the *Magnificat*. This now takes the place of the Post-Communion in other Masses, and when these have been sung, the Mass concludes with the blessing and the last Gospel according to St. John.

